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Community Advisory Group (CAG) Information Sheet



The U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) can assist with forming Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) at sites where hazardous waste cleanups are active. CAGs act as a way to communicate between regulators, residents, businesses and other interested parties. A CAG is not a decision-making body, but a CAG can share community recommendations that might shape cleanup decisions. CAG information can be found at: www.epa.gov/superfund/community/cag/index.htm. This fact sheet has been created based on EPA's *Guidance for Community Advisory Groups at Superfund Sites* by Technical Assistance Services for Communities (TASC), an EPA program that provides independent educational and technical assistance to communities.

What is a CAG and what does it do?

CAGs are informal organizations designed as a way to communicate between the diverse interests in a community, the potentially responsible parties and EPA and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) at a hazardous waste site. CAGs can communicate community concerns and viewpoints and give EPA and WDNR important feedback to inform the decision-making process at a site.

EPA's *Guidance for Community Advisory Groups at Superfund Sites* (www.epa.gov/superfund/community/cag/resource/guidance/caguide.pdf) states:

“...EPA anticipates that the CAGs will serve primarily as a means to foster interaction among interested members of an affected community, to exchange facts and information and to express views of CAG participants while attempting to provide, if possible, consensus recommendations from the CAG to EPA.” (p. 2)

CAGs are informal advisory groups; they do not have any decision-making authority, and they do not receive any resources or special attention above and beyond what would normally be provided to a community. CAGs are a vehicle to enhance communication between community members, potentially responsible parties, EPA and WDNR so that better cleanup decisions can be made. CAGs typically consist of one member from each organization, interest group or view point at a site.

What are the steps to forming a CAG?

Once it is determined that forming a CAG would enhance communications at a site, typically the following steps occur:

1. Establish membership.
2. Agree on operating procedures and ground rules.
3. Select CAG leadership.
4. Organize, manage and run meetings.

The above four steps are a guide for forming a CAG, yet each CAG must meet the community's specific circumstances and needs, so some variability within these steps might be appropriate.



Methods for establishing membership (EPA CAG Guidance Section 4.5)

A range of methods are used to determine the initial membership of the CAG and typically the CAG establishes procedures for adding or removing members over time. Below is a brief description of several methods that can be used to establish the initial CAG membership. It is often useful to have an outside third party assist with the initial CAG formation.

Screening Panels Model

EPA can organize a short-term Screening Panel to review nominations for CAG membership. This Panel should be representative of the diversity of the community and should have a leader. The local community should identify CAG members who represent the diverse interests of the community. The Panel identifies a list of recommended nominees for membership on the CAG to submit to EPA for review and comment, not approval or disapproval. The process should be transparent.

Existing Group Model

An existing group in the community might be selected as the CAG if it represents the diverse interests of the community. If the group does not appear representative of the community, EPA can suggest that the group expand membership to include community interests not represented.

Core Group Model

EPA, in consultation with WDNR/tribal/local governments, could select a Core Group that represents the diverse interests of the community. The application process for the Core Group might include self-nomination. The members of the Core Group would then select the remaining members of the CAG in a fair and open manner.

Self-Selecting Group Model

After EPA announces the opportunity to form a CAG, the local community identifies CAG members they believe represent the diverse interests of their community.

Local Government Group Model

In a fair and open manner, the local government would select members of the community to serve on the CAG. This model might be appropriate at a site where there is a positive working relationship and good communication between the local government and the community.

Who should be a member of a CAG?

(EPA CAG Guidance Section 4.2)

CAG membership typically includes one member from each interested or affected stakeholder group. Members may be drawn from:

- Residents or owners of residential property near the site and those who might be affected directly by site releases.
- Those potentially affected by releases from the site, even if they do not live or own property near the site.
- Local medical professionals practicing in the community.
- Native American tribes and communities.
- Representatives of minority and low-income groups.
- Citizens, or environmental or public interest group members living in the community.
- Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) recipients, if a TAG has been awarded at the site.
- Local government, including pertinent city or county governments and governmental units that regulate land use in the vicinity of the site.
- Representatives of the local labor community.
- Facility owners and other significant Potentially Responsible Parties (PRPs) (those potentially responsible for the contamination).
- Local business community members.
- Other local, interested individuals.

